Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2015

His Majesty
King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

Your Majesty:

We write as Members of the United States Congress, first, to express our condolences upon the passing of your predecessor and brother, King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud. The leadership your country exercises in the Middle East region, and the strong partnership that exists today between Saudi Arabia and the United States, are important aspects of King Abdullah's legacy.

You have ascended to the throne at a time when your country faces many challenges, including the threat from ISIL in Syria and Iraq, and mounting unrest on your southern border in Yemen. The region as a whole is in the midst of change as people demand governments that will better meet their basic needs for security, opportunity and just treatment. As the leader of Saudi Arabia you set an example through the policies you adopt at home and the way you use your considerable influence abroad.

Thus we also write to encourage you, as you assume your new responsibilities, to serve as an advocate for human rights and democratic reforms within your country. Recently, and all too often, women, religious minorities and peaceful political reformers have faced major obstacles to their desire to freely express themselves and fully participate in public life in Saudi Arabia. These obstacles include intimidation, harassment, and threats, and some have paid a heavy price for their efforts. As you may know, promoting human rights and religious freedom are key objectives of U.S. foreign policy. We are aware of cases of persons who have been charged with apostasy or deported for practicing minority Muslim or Christian faiths. Others have received harsh sentences for exercising basic rights. One example is Raif Badawi, who was sentenced to ten years in prison and a thousand lashes for founding a website that encouraged religious and political debate. In his case, representatives of the U.S. government have called upon your country to cancel the sentence, and have also expressed concern with the 15-year sentence and the travel ban imposed on his lawyer, Waleed Abu Al-Khair. Another example is that of the independent human rights organization, the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), whose founders have all either been wrongfully imprisoned or put on trial.

In this moment of transition, and recognizing that your country is a state party to several international human rights conventions, you have an historic opportunity to build on the steps taken by King Abdullah to strengthen education and initiate judicial reform, by ending the ban on women driving and reforming the guardianship system; lifting restrictions on public gatherings and social media; reforming "anti-terror"

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

laws that have criminalized some who peacefully express criticism; ensuring due process in criminal proceedings and ending the use of torture; allowing religious minorities to exercise their faiths; and enacting a law for associations so that local human rights organizations are formally recognized. Cancelling the sentences against Mr. Raif Badawi and Mr. Waleed Abu al-Khair, and releasing immediately and unconditionally all prisoners of conscience punished solely for exercising their basic right to freedom of expression, would be important steps that would communicate your commitments to an expectant international audience.

Sincerely,

JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress
Co-Chair
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

PETER J. ROSKAM
Member of Congress

GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress

JOSEPH R. PITTS
Member of Congress
Co-Chair
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

LLOYD DOGGETT
Member of Congress

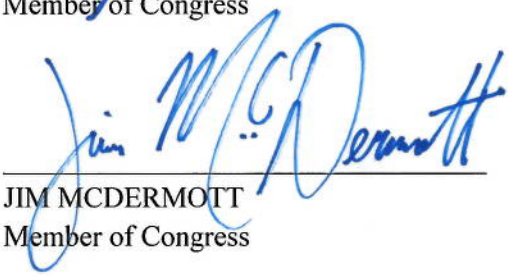
WALTER B. JONES
Member of Congress

RAUL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

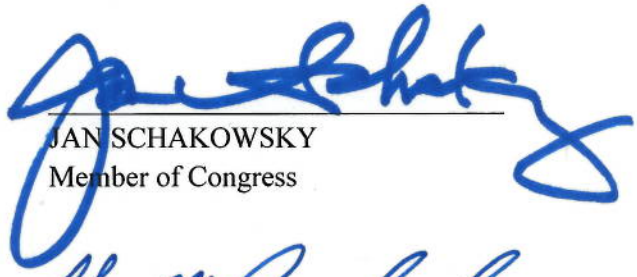
RANDY WEBER
Member of Congress

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON
Member of Congress

JACKIE WALORSKI
Member of Congress



JIM MCDERMOTT
Member of Congress



JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress

CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress

GUS M. BILIRAKIS
Member of Congress

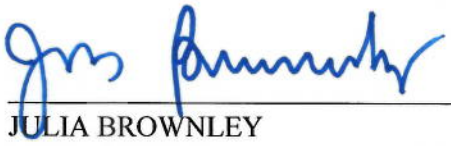
DEREK KILMER
Member of Congress

ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

PETER DEFAZIO
Member of Congress

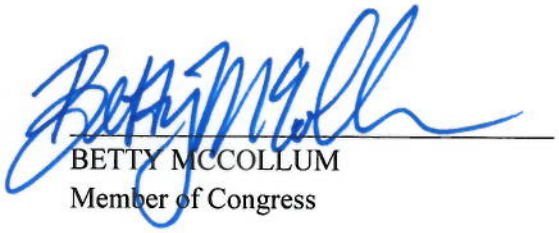
ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress



JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress

DOUG COLLINS
Member of Congress

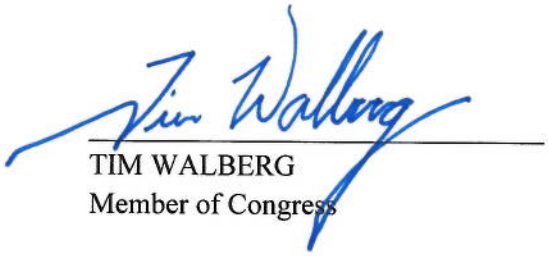
DINA TITUS
Member of Congress



BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress

DAVID CICILLINE
Member of Congress

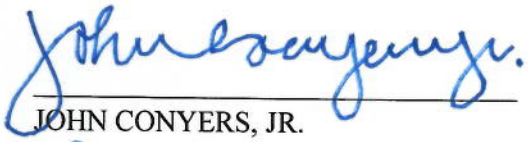
STEVE COHEN
Member of Congress



TIM WALBERG
Member of Congress

JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress

GERALD E. CONNOLLY
Member of Congress

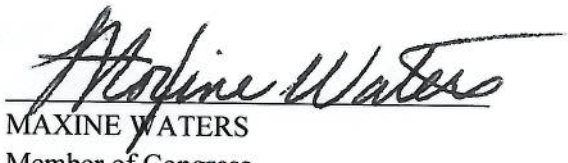


JOHN CONYERS, JR.
Member of Congress

COLLIN C. PETERSON
Member of Congress

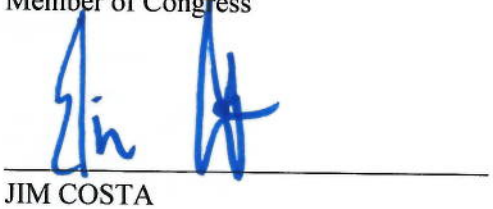
WILLIAM KEATING
Member of Congress

CHARLES RANGEL
Member of Congress



MAXINE WATERS
Member of Congress

EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER
Member of Congress

CORRINE BROWN
Member of Congress

KEITH ROTHFUS
Member of Congress

ROSA DELAURO
Member of Congress

JOSÉ E. SERRANO
Member of Congress

DANIEL LIPINSKI
Member of Congress

ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress

JEB HENSARLING
Member of Congress

NIKI TSONGAS
Member of Congress

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

DAVID W. JOLLY
Member of Congress

ANN WAGNER
Member of Congress

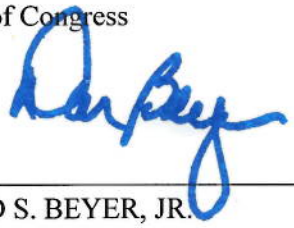
BRAD SHERMAN
Member of Congress

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
Member of Congress

JIM HIMES
Member of Congress

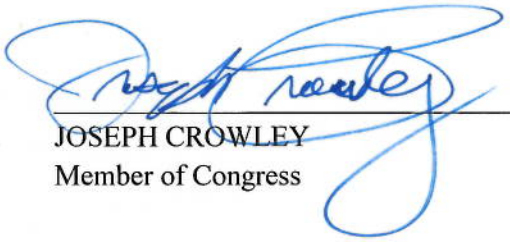
MICHAEL E. CAPUANO
Member of Congress

VICKY HARTZLER
Member of Congress



DONALD S. BEYER, JR.
Member of Congress

CHRIS GIBSON
Member of Congress

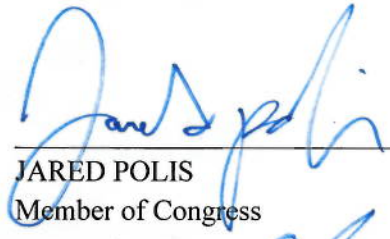


JOSEPH CROWLEY
Member of Congress

SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress

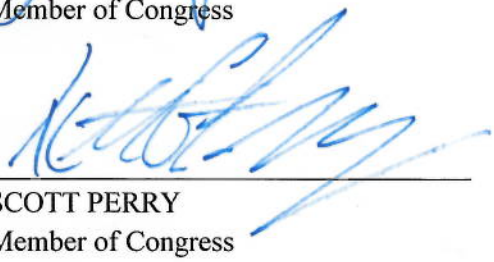
SUSAN W. BROOKS
Member of Congress

CHRIS SMITH
Member of Congress



JARED POLIS
Member of Congress

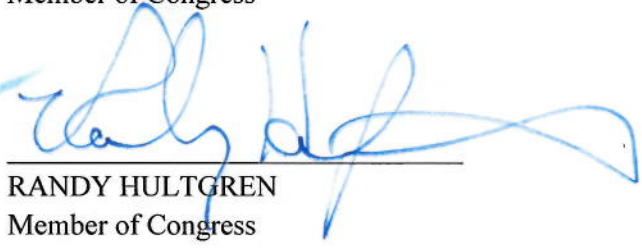
TRENT FRANKS
Member of Congress



SCOTT PERRY
Member of Congress

MIKE COFFMAN
Member of Congress

RODNEY DAVIS
Member of Congress



RANDY HULTGREN
Member of Congress

PETE OLSON
Member of Congress

SANDER LEVIN
Member of Congress

JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress